

N Nobody knows
experiential goods; quality not intrinsic, uncertain, socially made · root

O Organise
W1-2 · model, structure, team

S Signal
W3 · signals replace measurement

F Filter
W6 · gatekeepers, selection systems

T Technology
W5 (+W1) · shock 1: moves the locus of control

G Globalisation
W7 readings · shock 2: content local, form global

"No One Sees Future Tastes Globally" · because nobody knows, everybody looks for someone who does: firms organise, creators signal, gatekeepers filter; tech + globalisation change *who* the gatekeepers are. **Answer = MEDAL:** Myth · Evidence · Dynamic · Application · Limit

N Two kinds of value LAMPEL, LANT & SHAMSIE 2000
Utilitarian = objective, measurable, stable. **Experiential** = subjective, emotional, unpredictable. Cultural goods serve an aesthetic/expressive function (Hirsch 1972); standards are abstract ideals → **ambiguity**: unpredictable demand + creativity hard to control. Consumers want familiar + novel.
Two standing problems: **demand is unpredictable; creative production is hard to monitor + control**. Tacit > codified knowledge; the key resources (talent, creativity) are amorphous and sit in people the firm barely controls.

7 claims on quality W6
What: 1 not intrinsic (technical ≠ cultural/aesthetic; symbolic value) · 2 uncertain: **nobody knows** (Caves 2000) = **symmetrical ignorance**, not asymmetric info · 3 socially constructed (taste, distinction, cultural capital). **Who:** 4 gatekeepers certify → **selection, evaluation, legitimation** · 5 popularity ≠ quality.
When: 6 conventions: innovation first looks low-quality · 7 a process: creation → selection → gatekeeping → signalling → reception → evaluation → legitimation → **canonisation**.

6 quality regimes CRITERION · JUDGE
Technical craft · professionals | **Aesthetic** artistic achievement · critics/peers | **Commercial** market performance · consumers | **Institutional** legitimacy · gatekeepers | **Popular** appreciation · public | **Cultural** lasting significance · society over time.
The Art Critic Is Pretty Cultured
Experience goods: must consume to judge; criteria non-utilitarian + hedonic → hunt for credible, salient signals. **Herd behaviour** → inequality + unpredictability.

O Business model = 4 interlocking boxes JOHNSON, CHRISTENSEN & KAGERMANN 2008
CVP (the "job to be done"; precision matters most) · **Profit formula** (revenue model, cost structure, margin model, resource velocity) · **Key resources** (people, tech, brand, channels) · **Key processes** (rules, metrics, norms). Interdependent: change one → rewrite the rest. *"A great technology is useless without a business model that envelops it."* Rio 1998, Cabo fail; **iPod** 2003 wins: **reverse razor-and-blades** = low-margin iTunes "blades" lock in high-margin iPod "razor".
4 barriers to a job: wealth, access, skill, time (Tata Nano; Hilti sells tool use; Dow Corning → separate unit Xiameter). New model when all 4 boxes must change: shut-out customers · new technology · job focus · low-end disruptors · shifting basis of competition. **Patient for growth, impatient for profit**.
Arts blueprint + turmoil POISSON-DE HARO & MONTPETIT 2012
Profit formula → **financial balance (non-profit) formula**: box office + subsidies + philanthropy. Core assets = **reputational + human** resources (artistic novelty, pedigree). 5 resources: human, physical, organisational, financial, reputational; **dynamic capabilities** = reconfiguring them.
Turmoil = significant change, gradual or sudden, internal or external. **TDM** (Théâtre Les Deux Mondes): internal = no artistic renewal (gradual), failing portfolio (BCG: Teeka cash cow, 2191 Nights dog); external = competition (gradual), touring-grant cuts 2008 (sudden).
Corporate trap: cut art/people → reputation ↓ → CVP ↓ → grants + box office ↓ = **death spiral**. **Creative pivot:** protect intangibles; Central Theatres alliance shares venue + admin, volume and novelty ↑.

5 polarities: balance, never solve LAMPEL ET AL. 2008
Artistic values ↔ mass entertainment · Product differentiation ↔ market innovation · Demand analysis ↔ market construction · Vertical integration ↔ flexible specialisation · Individual inspiration ↔ creative systems.
What · How new · Whose taste · Who makes · Where value comes from
Conventional vs random long tail WALDFOGEL 2022

	Conventional	Random
Bottleneck	distribution (shelf space)	production (capital to create)
Mechanism	infinite display, existing niches	cheap experimentation, new products
Quality	predictable: entry = worse	nobody knows: entry can be a hit

Unpredictability multiplier $\Delta R/\Delta C$: movies **3.83** (R².57) · books **8.62** (.21) · TV **12.89** (.11). Harder to predict → bigger windfall. ~10% of top-150 bestsellers self-published by 2012 (40% romance).
Long tail in labour WALDFOGEL 2022
Paradox I: work migrated outside the firm (publishing jobs 97k → 75k; recording \$20.9bn → \$13.5bn; yet independents 425k → 850k+). **Paradox II:** total earnings \$16bn → \$24bn, average \$30k → \$24k.
Compositional effect: 90th + 50th pct stable, 10th collapses = exploding denominator of hobbyists.

Hierarchy · market · latent organisation STARKEY, BARNATT & TEMPEST 2009

	Studio	Gig market	Latent org
Staff cost	high	low	low
Quality	high control	high risk	via trust
Knowledge	institutional	individual, transitory	shared
Relations	permanent	fleeting	enduring but dormant

Same members, intermittently **manifest**; a mental map in a **broker's** mind; currencies = knowledge + trust. UK TV, 25% independent quota (1990 Act), publisher-broadcaster.
Who explores? PERRETTI & NEGRO 2006 · 6,446 FILMS 1929-58
O-ring: one weak member sinks the project → brokers reuse old-timers (exploit) → stagnation without newcomers / new combinations (explore; March 1991).
Status: U-shape. Elites (secure) + newcomers explore; **middle-status conformity**. **Hierarchy: U-shape.** 1 layer (CEO spreads risk) + 3 layers (middle-manager liaisons absorb risk) explore; 2 layers (autonomous teams) exploit = **autonomy paradox**.
W2 synthesis: Fuel (3-layer hierarchies, elite brokers) → Vessel (latent organisations) → Output (random long tail).
W1 synthesis: new worlds, old rules
1 **Value creation remains structural:** no pivot of the offering without rewiring resources. 2 **Cacophony demands curation:** infinite scale does not replace context, trusted commentary, visceral markers of value. 3 **Gatekeepers evolved, not evaporated:** platforms are the new hegemony (see side 2, T).

S "Quality is unobservable. We buy signals."

	Signal	Receiver	Core mechanism	Consequence	Study · data
1 Expert's dilemma	award / gallery / review	corporate expert buyers	defensive justification	long-term survival	Kackovic et al. 2020 · 471 Rijksakademie alumni, 22 collections, 1990-2012
2 Generalist's trap	genre specialisation	casting directors	crude skill heuristic	career lock-in	Zuckerman et al. 2003 · 32,141 actors (IMDb 1992-97) + 13 interviews
3 Contagion of mere association	mere association	Hollywood employers	defensive conformity	permanent exile	Pontikes, Negro & Rao 2010 · 31,781 artists, 5,712 films, 1945-60
4 Imbalance of forgiveness	fading stigma	modern hirers	implicit bias	associate penalty	Negro et al. 2021 · 412,393 artist-years + experiment (292)
5 Post-human signal	AIGC tag	TikTok audiences	perceived effort	parasocial severance	Carney, Riveros & Tully 2026 · 1,135,817 posts, 8,650 creators; 8 exps, N 3,396

1 Third-party signals
Gallery affiliation >3× a review, award >2×. Stock of past signals > latest; decay 20%/yr, **half-life 3.1 yrs**. Agency risk: agents need choices they can defend. ⇒ cultivate credible endorsements over years. *Limit:* top segment, positive signals only.
2 Typecasting
Simple identity (valuation easy, but boxed in) vs complex (flexible, but confusing). **Two stages:** (1) selection for casting = **conformity** to category; (2) selection for role = **differentiation**. Novice 16.4 → 21.3%; veteran 38.4 → 33.5% when crossing. Door-opener early, cage later. Not just skills, not just networks. "Robust action" vs "categorical imperative".
3 Stigma by association
HUAC, *Red Channels*. One later-blacklisted associate = **-13%** odds of work; actor-writer tie -20%; stars 16% vs 11%. Mechanisms: **defensive conformity · automatic cognition · heterophilous spillover · broadcast effect**. ⇒ false positives; moral entrepreneurs lose control. Strongest for hidden, voluntary deviance.
4 Destigmatisation
After 1958 direct targets rebound; **associates' penalties worsen**. **Dual-process iceberg:** explicit bias suppressed by norm shifts, implicit bias persists. ⇒ monitor associates; target implicit prejudice. Weaker when ties are meaningful + consciously judged.

5 AI disclosure
AIGC label = **-7 to -8%** engagement, all tiers. Not AI aversion, quality or "fake media": label → lower **perceived effort** → weaker **parasocial connection**. Exception: effortful tool label ("Photoshop Neural Filters") removes it. Risk: creators hide AI.
Pattern: receivers do not measure quality. They protect themselves (1, 3), use shortcuts (2, 4) and reward visible effort (5).
Every Good Creator Fears Perception

F
FILTER · W6 COMPETITIVE PROCESSES

Selection system + attribution theory GEMSER, LEENDERS & WIJNBERG 2008
Selected = producers; **selectors** evaluate → determine value. **Market** (consumers: MTV, People's Choice) · **Peer** (producers: Oscars, guilds) · **Expert** (critics: Golden Globes, critics' circles).
Consumers assess a signal's source: **credibility** (trustworthiness + expertise) × **salience** (prominence in memory).
Mainstream: market awards *not* stronger than peer awards (other signals: ads, screens, box office).
Independent: expert awards strongest (small marketing budgets). Box office + screens, 1997–2002.

Gatekeepers = brokers in networks FOSTER, BORGATTI & JONES 2011
3 roles: **co-producer** (shapes content) · **selector** (grants access) · **tastemaker** (evaluates, promotes).
Never alone: search + selection depend on social context.
Strong ties: trust, deep communication | redundant info, groupthink. **Weak ties**: new info, reach, bridges | low trust.

Boston clubs	with competitors	with bands
Original	strong, dense sharing	weak, many bands
Cover	weak, arm's length	strong, few bands

Uncertain niche → network governance; predictable → relational governance.

Editors' decisions FRANSSSEN & KUIPERS 2013 · DUTCH TRANSLATION RIGHTS
Problems → coping: oversupply → **decentralised networks** (agents, scouts) · uncertainty → **trust** (transnational) · no objective standards → **expertise** · competition → **symbolic capital**. Boundary spanning: mediate producers/consumers, bridge creative/managerial, link national/transnational.
Neo-institutionalism: routines to control uncertainty → **isomorphism** (seek foreign peers with the same taste; similar catalogues). **Field theory** (Bourdieu): status struggle over **symbolic capital**; catalogue = presentation of self + position in field. Capitals: economic, cultural, social, symbolic. Gatekeeping = multi-stage; editors are centres of gatekeeping networks.

T
TECHNOLOGY · W5 + DIGITAL HALF OF W1

W5 synthesis	Demand · Elberse 2008	Success · Salganik & Watts 2009	Boundaries · Shi 2023	Supply · Benner & Waldfogel 2020	Reputation · Benegal et al. 2026
Pre-digital myth	niche is profitable	quality dictates success	consumers want boundaries	the middle is dead	status protects experimentation
Reality	hits still dominate	social influence breeds chaos	gatekeepers force boundaries	the middle tail thrives	status amplifies AI backlash
Implication	protect blockbuster capital	optimise for social signals	blur genres for reach	invest in digital-first	hide or heavily curate AI use
Evidence	Rhapsody 32m streams/1m tracks; Quickflix 322k rentals. Bottom-decile shoppers still pick 34% top-decile hits	Music Lab, 48 songs, parallel worlds. Gini .28–.42 → .45–.56 when sorted by popularity	Billboard 2012: power from genre radio → streaming consumers. DiD country vs pop: crossovers ↑	51,097 US films 1980–2016. <\$100k: ~0 → 660+; \$150m+ ↑; \$50–150m ↓; \$100k–\$10m middle tail	383 (composer, studio vs student) + 424 (ad slogans, 4 conditions): AI users lower on prestige, competence
Dynamic	McPhee 1963: natural monopoly (light users → hits) + double jeopardy (fewer fans, who like it less)	cumulative advantage ; quality = prerequisite, not guarantee; failure easier to predict than success	specialised intermediaries value boundaries; reorientation (generalists, big markets), not experimentation	direct-to-digital skips ~\$5k/week/screen; R-rated/unrated; newcomers (<5 yrs), major-studio inertia	authenticity fully mediates; anthropocentric prototype; declaring non-use gives no bonus
Limit	single-catalogue user; niche as overflow vs niche-first; share vs volume	rankings help individuals, raise inequality + unpredictability	needs specialised intermediaries; some consumers are purists	movies only; counts vs dollars	paper: no buffer for anyone; lecture: reputation = liability (expectation gap)

Friction → filters W1 SYNTHESIS
Distribution friction (human gatekeepers) → infinite content → **attention bottleneck** → platform hegemony (algorithmic gatekeepers). *“The power did not go to the creator; it went to the platform.”*
3 digital illusions KHAIRE 2017
Cacophony paradox: disintermediation (KDP) → lost in noise; creators crave publishers. **Yelp paradox**: crowd taste → fake reviews, lowest common denominator; critics still needed. **Showroom paradox**: pure-play trap; Net-a-Porter, Warby Parker, Bonobos go physical: ambience + touch construct value. Intermediaries: **introduction, instruction, inclusion**; need **independence + expertise**. “Commerce needs commentary.” Cultural distance > physical distance.

Platform power AGUIAR, REIMERS & WALDFOGEL 2023
Passive aggregators (Spotify, Amazon Books, YouTube): infinite shelf, algorithms + crowd ratings. **Curated** gatekeepers (Netflix, HBO): editorial selection, investor + distributor.
Aggregation: Amazon stars add >10× the consumer surplus of NYT reviews; threat = fake reviews.
Curation: Spotify effect, major playlist ≈ ⅓ of a hit's streams. Risk: self-preferencing.
Middle tail viable on curated platforms; unlicensed work → **monetisation cliff** (zero revenue).

Locus of control W5 CLOSE
Technology does not democratise outcomes; it shifts control: **shelf space** (blockbuster era) → **social contagion** (network) → **platform gatekeepers** (streaming) → **algorithmic + authentic attribution** (AI). *Success belongs to those who understand who controls the boundaries.*
Shi's mechanism test
Reorientation: larger markets, stable trend, generalists ✓. **Experimentation**: large + small markets, variable trend, specialists ✗.
Guardian 2022: Spotify quitters, “endless choice, but you're not listening”; streaming = passive, utilitarian use.

G
GLOBAL · W7 READINGS

Homogenise? COWEN 2002 · ECONOMIST 2022
Cowen, creative destruction: diversity **within** societies ↑, **across** societies ↓, together. Also diversity over time; objective vs operative. Cultures are hybrids. Losers: small cultures lose their **ethos**. Domestic music: India 96%, Egypt 81%, Brazil 73%.
Economist: pop culture is **multipolar** (K-pop, Afrobeats, Squid Game). US share of OECD AV imports ~40% → 25%; English in top-100 (India, Indonesia, Korea) 52% → 31%. Drivers: growth + internet. Soft power.

Who decodes? KUIPERS & DE KLOET 2009
LotR survey, N 24,747: **no national patterns**. Involved “epic” cluster near the Anglophone centre vs diverse cluster further out. Transnational repertoires of evaluation; against **methodological nationalism**; **banal cosmopolitanism**. *Limit*: fan sample.

How it travels MORAN 2008 · PATHANIA-JAIN 2001
Formats (Big Brother, Idol): a recipe/“bible” of know-how remade locally; sells repeatable success. Lotman: strangeness → indigenisation → national-internationalism → in-between → commendation.
Alliances (India): local partner = culture (“tour guide”); global parent = finance, tech, marketing (“trophy parent”). Content localises, **modes of production homogenise**.
Rule: content goes local, form goes global.

X
CROSS-LINKS

Gatekeepers evolve, never evaporate
Hierarchies (studios) → specialised intermediaries (radio, editors, juries) → the crowd (charts, ratings) → platforms (playlists, commissioning) → algorithms + authenticity. Remove a filter → attention bottleneck → a new filter appears.
Explore ↔ exploit thread
Differentiation ↔ innovation (Lampel) · predictable bets ↔ cheap experiments (Waldfogel) · old-timers ↔ newcomers (Perretti & Negro) · cover ↔ original clubs (Foster) · genre ↔ crossover (Shi) · repertoire ↔ renewal (TDM).

Three tails
Head \$150m+: hits dominate (Elberse). **Middle** \$100k–\$10m: newcomers, digital (Benner). **Long**: unprofitable, yet source of random hits + hobbyist labour (Waldfogel).
Paradox deck
Cacophony · Yelp · showroom · labour I + II · autonomy · expert's dilemma · generalist's trap · forgiveness · transparency penalty · social signals · diversity (within ↑ / across ↓).

MEDAL in one line each
M the assumption attacked · **E** author, setting, one number · **D** mechanism (why) · **A** what the actor should do · **L** boundary condition.
Readings by week
W1 Johnson+ · Poisson-de Haro & Montpetit · Khaire · Aguiar+ | **W2** Lampel+ · Waldfogel · Starkey+ · Perretti & Negro | **W3** Kackovic+ · Zuckerman+ · Pontikes+ · Negro+ · Carney+ | **W5** Elberse · Salganik & Watts · Shi · Benner & Waldfogel · Benegal+ | **W6** Gemser+ · Foster+ · Franssen & Kuipers | **W7** Cowen · Economist · Kuipers & de Kloet · Moran · Pathania-Jain